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SUBJECT: VENEZUELAN YOUTH FESTIVAL: IT'S NO WOODSTOCK

SUMMARY

1. (U) Over 20,000 international delegates from more than 130 countries are expected to attend the 16th World Youth and Students Festival in Caracas from August 7 to 15. Organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, the theme is "For Peace and Solidarity We Fight against Imperialism and War." With robust GOV financial and logistical support and a militant focus, the festival aims to spread Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian revolution around the world. Events will include an anti-imperialist tribunal judging "crimes of imperialism," and a demonstration to mark the defeat of the recall referendum on August 15, 2004. Evo Morales, El Salvador's Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) leader Schafik Handal, and Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) leader Daniel Ortega are slated to attend. End Summary.

FIGHT FOR PEACE

2. (U) Over 20,000 international delegates representing more than 130 countries are expected to attend the 16th World Youth and Students Festival August 7 to 15, hosted in Caracas. Organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, an international youth NGO aligned with communist and socialist parties, the theme for the 16th World Youth and Students Festival is "For Peace and Solidarity We Fight against Imperialism and War." The first festival was held in Prague in 1947. Havana hosted in 1997. Owing to a free concert to promote the festival at a military airfield in Caracas, university opposition leaders believe Caracas will have a large turnout--no better way to attract Venezuelan youth than to throw a good party.

3. (U) Events will take place in Caracas and surrounding states, including Miranda, Vargas, Aragua, Cojedes, Carabobo, and Guarico. Delegates will visit indigenous groups and Chavez's social Missions programs in various locations. The festival will include debates on peace, war, and imperialism; sovereignty and globalization. The festival will culminate with a two-day anti-imperialist tribunal that will judge "crimes of imperialism" such as the case of the so-called Cuban terrorist Luis Posada Carriles. The festival was planned to coincide with the anniversary of the recall referendum on August 15, 2004. As a finale to the festival, a national celebration is planned to mark the "triumph of the people" over the referendum.

LOGISTICS FOR THE TROOPS

4. (U) GOV officials such as Minister of Interior and Justice, Jesse Chacon, and Army General Raul Baduel sit on the planning committee for the festival to organize housing, transportation, and conference facilities to accommodate as many as 20,000 delegates. The National Assembly approved over \$8 million to fund the festival. Venezuela will send a delegation of over 2,500 youth representing all 23 Venezuelan states and various sectors of the population, from athletes and artists to musicians and missionaries. They intend to send a 90-person indigenous delegation and 150 military youth.

5. (U) The U.S. delegation is reportedly 900-strong. Over half of the participants are expected to be from the Latin America, including a Cuban delegation of 1,500. Venezuelan Conviasa and Cubana Airlines discounted fares for participants from Latin America and the Caribbean. A \$200 participation fee for "Imperialist" countries; \$150 for Eastern Europe and the Middle East; and \$100 for "Semicolonial" countries covers housing, food and transportation. In President Chavez's television show, Alo Presidente, Chavez referred to the 20,000 youth as an "army." The campaign to organize volunteers, Battle for Victory, is

divided into two groups. One is divided into brigades and sub-brigades, and the other is the Battalion of Reinforcements in case volunteers "desert."

COMMENT

16. (U) The festival's anti-imperialist theme is overtly anti-U.S and represents another example of Chavez's mobilization of state resources to promote his ideological agenda. Like many of Chavez's inflated expectations, the festival is unlikely to attract the projected 20,000 youth. With opposition youth excluded, the socialists will be preaching to the choir during the ensuing one-sided debates. With a majority of Latin American participants, Chavez is using this as an opportunity to assert regional leadership. The militant nature of the festival reflects the belligerent rhetoric of Chavez's Bolivarian Revolution as well as the militarized nature of his government. Despite the concert, this is not Woodstock. Brownfield

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